

Message Text

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TO AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 093641

EXDIS TOSEC 351

S/S FOR ATHERTON

FOLLOWING IS REPEAT TUNIS 2575 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO

CAIRO APRIL 29:

QTE C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 2575

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TS, US

SUBJECT: PROJECTED VISIT TO U.S. OF PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA

1. FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI CALLED ME TO HIS OFFICE
APRIL 29 TO DISCUSS DATES FOR PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S VISIT
TO U.S. WHILE HE SAID THAT TENTATIVE DATE OF JUNE 5
AND 6 WHICH HAD BEEN FIXED FOR WASHINGTON VISIT CONTINUE
TO BE SATISFACTORY TO GOT, TUNISIANS ARE AWARE OF POSSIBILITY
THAT THESE DATES MAY HAVE TO BE CHANGED IN LIGHT OF PRESIDENT

NIXON'S TRAVEL PLANS. CHATTI RECALLED THAT ASSISTANT
SECRETARY EASUM HAD INDICATED THAT PRESIDENT NIXON MIGHT

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BE TRAVELING TOWARD END OF MAY (STATE 081412). CHATTI

ADDED THAT THIS POSSIBILITY HAD BEEN REINFORCED BY INFORMATION GOT HAD RECENTLY RECEIVED FROM EGYPTIANS THAT PRESIDENT NIXON WOULD BE VISITING CAIRO AT THAT TIME. ACCORDINGLY, CONTINUED CHATTI, IF PRESIDENT NIXON IS UNABLE TO RECEIVE PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA IN WASHINGTON DURING FIRST WEEK IN JUNE, HE WOULD PROPOSE FOR OUR CONSIDERATION POSTPONING BOURGUIBA VISIT TO U.S. UNTIL NEXT NOVEMBER.

2. CHATTI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE HAD INFORMED ME FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM WASHINGTON THAT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA COULD ALWAYS ADJUST HIS PLANS AND VISIT CHINA FIRST, ARRIVING IN WASHINGTON DURING SECOND WEEK IN JUNE, SHOULD PRESIDENT NIXON BE TRAVELLING. NOW, HOWEVER, CHATTI HAD BECOME AWARE OF UNDESIRABILITY FROM STANDPOINT OF BOURGUIBA'S HEALTH FOR HIM TO TRAVEL FROM CHINA TO U.S. BECAUSE OF UNFAVORABLE TIME CHANGE. ALSO, HE FELT THAT BOURGUIBA WOULD BE TIRED UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN WASHINGTON IF HE VISITED CHINA FIRST AND HE ATTACHED CONSIDERABLE IMPORTANCE TO BOURGUIBA'S ARRIVING IN WASHINGTON FRESH. IF PLANS WERE CHANGED, GOT WOULD WANT SOME ADVANCE NOTICE IN ORDER TO LINE UP POSSIBLE STOPOVERS IN PAKISTAN, ETC. ENROUTE TO CHINA.

3. I NOTED THAT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S VISIT TO U.S. HAD ALREADY BEEN POSTPONED COUPLE OF TIMES AND WONDERED WHETHER WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR BOURGUIBA TO POSTPONE HIS TRIP TO U.S., AS WELL AS TO CHINA, BY ONE WEEK, STILL TRAVELLING EAST TO WEST. CHATTI SAID THAT DATES FOR VISIT TO CHINA HAD ALREADY BEEN CHANGED TWICE AND IT WOULD BE AWKWARD TO REQUEST ANY FURTHER CHANGES. FURTHERMORE, HE WAS CONCERNED THAT BY SECOND WEEK IN JUNE THE WASHINGTON CLIMATE WOULD BE UNCONGENIAL -- THE DOCTORS HERE URGING THAT BOURGUIBA AVOID HOT CLIMATES.

4. I TOLD CHATTI THAT I WOULD PASS HIS VIEWS TO WASHINGTON AND WOULD BE BACK IN TOUCH AS SOON AS I HAD A RESPONSE. I NOTED THAT WE MIGHT HAVE TO WAIT ANOTHER WEEK OR MORE BEFORE PRESIDENT NIXON'S PLANS WERE FIRMED UP. IF PRESIDENT NIXON WERE INDEED IN WASHINGTON DURING FIRST WEEK IN JUNE, I BELIEVE THAT CURRENTLY PROPOSED DATES OF JUNE 5 AND 6
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REMAINED SATISFACTORY. I ASKED CHATTI WHETHER GOT HAD GIVEN THOUGHT TO PUBLIC EFFECT OF POSTPONEMENT OF BOURGUIBA'S VISIT TO THE U.S. AT TIME WHEN BOURGUIBA PROCEEDING TO CHINA. CHATTI THOUGHT THAT THIS WOULD BE EXPLICABLE IN TERMS OF PRESIDENT NIXON'S LAST-MINUTE TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS.

5. COMMENT: WHILE TUNISIANS UNDERSTAND REASONS FOR OUR

INABILITY TO CONFIRM PROJECTED DATES FOR BOURGUIBA'S VISIT
TO WASHINGTON, THEY ARE OBVIOUSLY GETTING A LITTLE ANXIOUS
AS TIME DRAWS NEAR. ALTERNATE POSSIBILITY OF VISIT
DURING SECOND WEEK OF JUNE APPEARS TO BE RULED OUT BY
TUNISIANS, AT LEAST FOR MOMENT. MY RECOMMENDATION IS THAT
WE NOT RPT NOT TAKE INITIATIVE TO POSTPONE VISIT TO NOVEMBER
UNTIL AND UNLESS PRESIDENT NIXON'S TRAVEL PLANS ARE FIRM.
IF WE AGREE IMMEDIATELY TO POSTPONE VISIT AND IT DEVELOPS THAT
PRESIDENT NIXON DOES INDEED REMAIN IN WASHINGTON DURING FIRST
WEEK IN JUNE, TUNISIANS MIGHT MISUNDERSTAND. RATHER, I SUGGEST
WE TELL CHATTI: (1) PRESIDENT NIXON'S PLANS ARE STILL UNCERTAIN
BUT WE HOPE TO BE ABLE TO GIVE DEFINITE RESPONSE SHORTLY;
(2) DATES OF JUNE 5 AND 6 FOR PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S VISIT ARE
STILL ON PRESIDENT'S CALENDAR; (3) IF IT HAPPENS THAT
PRESIDENT NIXON WILL BE TRAVELLING ABROAD DURING
FIRST WEEK IN JUNE, WE ARE PREPARED EITHER TO SET VISIT
FOR SECOND WEEK IN JUNE OR POSTPONE UNTIL NOVEMBER, DEPENDING
ON GOT PREFERENCES; (4) IF GOT FEELS IT CAN WAIT NO LONGER
BEFORE MAKING FINAL PLANS AND CHOOSES NOT RPT NOT TO AWAIT
DEFINITE WORD RE PRESIDENT NIXON'S PLANS, WE WOULD HAVE
NO OBJECTION TO CHANGING DATE OF VISIT TO NOVEMBER, AS LONG

AS GOT UNDERSTANDS THAT PRESIDENT NIXON MAY POSSIBLY BE
ABLE TO SEE PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA IN WASHINGTON JUNE 5 - 6.
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